

Religiosity and/or spirituality

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Objective:

Religiosity and/or spirituality (R/S) has been increasingly examined in medical research during the past two decades. Despite the increasing number of published studies, a systematic evidence based review (EBR) of the available data in the field of psychiatry has not been done during the last 20 years.

Method:

The literature was searched using Pubmed (1990 –2010). We examined original research published in the top 25% of psychiatry and neurology journals according to the ISI journals citation index 2010. Amongst the 43 publications that met the criteria, two studies were on organic mental disorders, nine on psychoactive substance abuse, five on schizophrenia, schizotypal or delusional disorders, two on bipolar disorder, 19 on depressive disorders, three on suicide, and three on neurotic, stress-related and somatoform disorders. Studies were rated by quality and the findings summarized.

Results:

Thirty-one studies (72.1%) found a positive relationship between R/S and better mental health, eight (18.6%) found mixed (positive and negative) results, and two (4.7%) reported a negative association. All studies on dementia, suicide and stress-related disorders found a positive association, as well as 79% and 67% of the papers on depression and substance abuse, respectively. In contrast, the findings in schizophrenia were mixed, and in bipolar disorder mainly negative.

Conclusions:

There is good evidence that R/S is correlated with better mental health in the areas of depression, substance abuse, and suicide; some evidence in neurosis and dementia; insufficient evidence in the course of bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, and no evidence in many other mental disorders.